



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### **Usage guidelines**

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### **About Google Book Search**

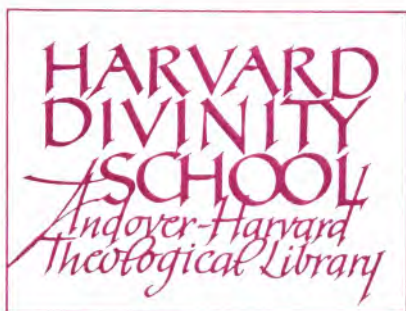
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

CONGREGATIONALISM

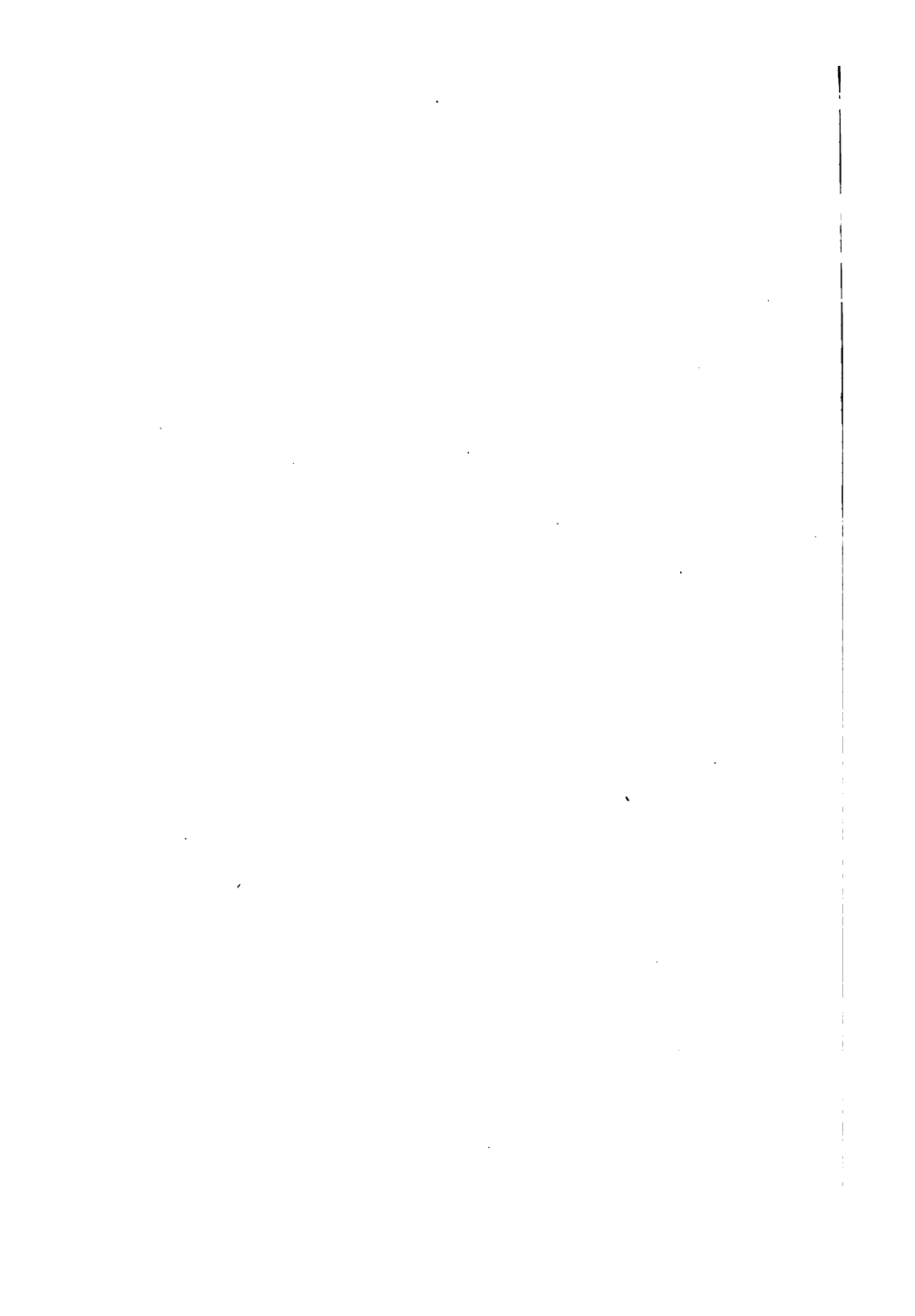
JEFFERSON

BX  
7232  
.J4

DOUGLAS  
WALLACE  
BRYANT 







# CONGREGATIONALISM

**"Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn and  
to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged."**

# CONGREGATIONALISM

BY

CHARLES E. JEFFERSON, D.D.



THE PILGRIM PRESS  
BOSTON      NEW YORK      CHICAGO



ANDOVER-HARVARD THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY  
HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL

*Copyright, 1910*  
BY LUTHER H. CARY

THE • PLIMPTON • PRESS  
[w • d • o]  
WORWOOD • MASS • U • S • A

BX

7232

J4

# CONGREGATIONALISM

## I

### USES OF HISTORY

**A** HEBREW preacher was never so much at home as when he was dealing with the past. It was his delight to carry his countrymen back over the road along which they had traveled and to revive the memories of the experiences through which the nation had come. He loved the past, not because he was the victim of that morbid sentimentalism which loves to brood over scenes which have vanished, but because he was so intensely interested in the future. The Hebrew preacher felt himself called of God to make the future glorious, and in order to do this he was obliged to use the past. He dealt with a people who were easily discouraged and in order to brace their drooping spirits he held up before them the glowing record of God's dealings with their fathers. By unrolling history he showed them how through all the centuries every night had dawned into a broader day, and every crown of thorns had been transfigured into a crown of glory. When his hearers grew faint-hearted and approached great duties with fear and doubtings, he heartened them and drove them forward by urging them to take one good, long look backward. The vision of what had been made it easier to believe in the things which were to be. When men saw bygone centuries stand behind

them, each one jeweled with the mercy of the Lord, they faced the future with untroubled faces, assured that he who had begun a good work in them would perform it until the final day. The vanished generations were colaborers with the preacher, driving into the hearts of living men strong reasons for expecting new revelations of God's grace. And so it was well-nigh impossible for a Hebrew preacher to preach without bringing into a sermon a bit of Hebrew history. He never wearied of recalling Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; he was never more eloquent than when relating the wonders of deliverance wrought by God through Moses. It was difficult for a Hebrew poet to write a poem without weaving into it some reference to the goodness with which God had crowned the years. The Hebrew leaders were always saying, "Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged." But there was a still deeper reason why the Hebrew preacher made such constant use of history. The Hebrews were dominated always by the conviction that they were a peculiar people, entrusted with a unique mission and appointed to a glorious destiny. From the very earliest times it had been borne in upon them that to them was given what was given to no other people, and that through them all the nations of the earth were ultimately to be blessed. To men possessed with such a belief all experience must become sacred. Everything that happened to the Hebrews was supposed by them to have a divine significance. Every event was a guide-post pointing the direction in which the people ought to move, every experience a window opening out

upon the Eternal. Their history was their Bible. It was the food upon which they reared their children. It was the literature which was read in the synagogues, it was history which the Levites sang in the temple service. Indeed, our Bible is little more than a book of history. The majority of its books are historical and the others are adorned and illumined by quotations from the historians. If we have "ears to hear," we can hear the old Book saying to us, "Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged. Look unto Abraham, your father, and unto Sarah that bare you!"

Indeed, the history of every nation is to that nation a Bible, a book which ought to be studied with unflinching enthusiasm and religious care. In the experience of a people, God's character is revealed and his will concerning that people is made increasingly clear. Every nation will be strong in proportion to its willingness to gather up the lessons which preceding generations have worked out, and to drink in the spirit of the mighty men who have made the nation what it is. I wonder if we Americans are studying our history as we ought to study it. Do we earnestly teach it to our children in our homes, does it hold the place in our schools which it ought to hold, is it used in the Christian pulpit as frequently and effectively as it ought to be used by the men who are the ordained leaders of a people who, like the Hebrews, are also a peculiar people and to whom God has entrusted a mission to mankind?

If some boy should ask why not preach every Sunday from a sentence taken from a United States history, the answer is that while the history

of every nation is in the deepest sense a Bible, there is a value to the Hebrew history which no other can match. The Hebrews had a capacity for religion quite exceptional in the history of the world. They had an insight into spiritual laws and processes and a genius for interpreting spiritual phenomena given to no other people. Because of their moral sensitiveness and their responsiveness to the movements of the Eternal Spirit, God was able to work out through them wonders which he could do through no one else. Out of that race he could bring a man in whom it was possible for the Godhead to dwell, and who could reveal to all the world both the disposition of God and the possibilities of man. For this reason the Bible, though largely a book of history, is exalted above all other books. To it is given a name which is above all other names, and to it belongs a power which no other book can claim.

In the reading of American history, therefore, the Bible is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We will count our history sacred, but we will hold it up in the light which streams upon it from the Book of Books, that in this light we may read in our own national experiences the wondrous messages of God.

## II

### PURITANISM

In order to grasp the significance of Congregationalism we must first master the meaning of Puritanism. What is Puritanism? Whence did it come, what did it do, when did it vanish? These are questions which ought to have answers in the mind of every intelligent American. Puri-

tanism in its essence is a zeal for purity in doctrine, worship, and conduct. This zeal has always been in the world. Every land and time has produced its Puritans. There were Puritans among the Hebrews. Elijah was one, Isaiah another, Ezra another, John the Baptist another. From the first century of Christian history until now, there have been men who have resisted the corruptions of their day, and hungered and thirsted after righteousness. The deeper the corruption, the hotter has been the desire to consume it.

In the fourth and fifth centuries of our era the Christian Church fell into the hands of a company of Roman politicians who converted the simple gospel of our Lord into a cumbrous and mysterious thing which only ecclesiastical experts could understand. The faith once delivered to the saints was wrapped round with many so-called traditions and curious interpretations, the simple worship of early days was elaborated into a gorgeous ceremonial decked out with rites and features taken from the pagan temples; the simple government of the early churches was developed into a vast system along lines suggested by the structure of the Roman Empire, officials rising, one order above another, in a compact and mighty hierarchy, at whose top there sat the august bishop of Rome. Under the sway of this hierarchy the virtues and graces of the Christian life in many places drooped and died, clergymen in appalling numbers became dissolute and idle, while the masses of the people floundered in ignorance and superstition. From the very first there were men who protested against the encroaching tyrannies and who endeavored to stem the devastating tide. From

the eighth century to the thirteenth there were isolated companies of Christians who uttered their protest against prevailing wrongs and strove to reproduce the pure and saintly life of Christ. In the fourteenth century an English priest, John Wycliffe, cried out against the usurpations and tyrannies of Rome with a voice that shook the universal Church. He was hated by the hierarchy and, had it not been for powerful defenders, he would have been promptly silenced. After his death his body was taken from its grave, burned to ashes, and the ashes were strewn in the little brook which flowed in front of the church in which this intrepid servant of God had fired the hearts of Englishmen by telling them the old, old story of Jesus and his love. In the fifteenth century a Bohemian professor, John Huss, following the example of Wycliffe, protested against the Roman abominations, and for this he was seized and burned, and his ashes were scattered in the river Rhine. At the close of the same century an Italian priest, Savonarola, enraged the hierarchy by his flaming thunderbolts, and he was strangled, and his body burned. Near the beginning of the sixteenth century a German priest, Martin Luther, uttered a protest so loud and thrilling that northern Europe rose to its feet in revolt against the corruption of the Roman Church.

A few years later the English king, Henry VIII, wrenched England out of the clutches of the bishop of Rome, and thus gave opportunity for the forces which had been working since the days of Wycliffe to manifest themselves in efforts for a thorough reform. These efforts, held in check by the conservative king, became more radical

and vigorous under Edward VI. The movement was checked by Bloody Mary, but gained fresh momentum in the reign of Elizabeth. It grew in volume and might through the reigns of the first two of the Stuarts and reached its consummation in the days of the Commonwealth. Puritanism, then, as that word is used by English-speaking people, is the movement for purity in doctrine, worship, and life which began in the reign of Henry VIII, as a protest against prevailing corruptions, which became a political force in the reign of Elizabeth, and which came to its coronation in the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell.

### III

#### PURITANS OF ENGLAND

The Puritans were the English men and women whose hearts were hot for release from Roman bondage, and who struggled to bring the Christian Church back to the simplicity and purity of the Gospels. We ought to take a close, long look at these men, for they have been often misunderstood and flagrantly misrepresented. They were hated and resisted by many of their neighbors while they were alive, and have been caricatured and lampooned by their enemies even to the present hour. In the minds of many intelligent persons now living the Puritans were a bigoted and benighted race, a set of sour-faced crabbed-hearted fanatics, who were unhappy themselves and made it uncomfortable for everybody else. According to the popular conception all Puritans talked with a nasal twang, dressed in uncouth and outlandish ways, and took delight in stripping



life of almost all that makes life worth living. Their foibles and eccentricities have been so magnified that some of us have lost sight completely of what the Puritan really was. He has seemed so odious and ridiculous that we have not cared to ascertain what he actually did. The mention of his name has called up before us a sour, narrow, inhuman individual from whom we have hidden our faces, and a thing is "puritanic" — so some people think — whenever it is intolerant, unreasonable, and gloomy.

But we must not allow ourselves to become the victims of an uninstructed imagination. We must study history and make ourselves acquainted with the facts. It is not safe to trust for guidance either caricatures or lampoons or scurrilous forgeries. If we are willing to do a little honest reading, we discover that the Puritans were men of like passions with ourselves, quite sensible and practical and altogether human. They loved and married and brought up children just as we do; they bought and sold, made money and lost it, just as we do; they laughed and cried, played and worked, like mortals of every land and time, and enjoyed to the utmost the rich, glorious privilege of living. They differed from one another just as men differ from one another nowadays. It is not fair to reduce the Puritans to one common type of disposition, or to set up any one individual and say, "That is Puritanism." Men of the same church or party differ widely from one another. Roman Catholics are not all alike, neither are Protestants, nor Republicans, nor Democrats. There were Puritans who were glum and morbid, narrow and superstitious, but there were others sunny-hearted and the most liberal men of their

generation. When we condemn such men as Nehemiah Wallington, we must not forget Sir Harry Vane, genial and open-minded, one of the noblest characters in English history. If we dislike John Endicott with his narrow ideas and cruel interpretations, we must remember John Winthrop, charitable and liberal, beautiful and sane, one of the very noblest figures in the history of our republic. Of course there were *little* Puritans, morbid and fussy, but let us never forget the great ones. There were Puritans who shone in the firmament of their times like stars of the first magnitude; others flickered and sputtered like tallow dips, and it is one of these tallow dips which the prejudiced critic of today seizes on and holds up to scorn, saying, "Here is the best which Puritanism could produce," while all the time he is living in a country flooded by the light which streamed from God into a darkened world through the great souls which had been cleansed and glorified by the Puritan spirit.

Puritanism infused into the greater natures which it mastered, so says an English scholar whose religion differs widely from that which the Puritans professed, a solemnity and a power such as have but once or twice been equaled in the whole history of mankind. When, therefore, you hear the jocosic critic pouring contempt upon the Puritans, ask him if he has ever heard of John Knox, one of the greatest giants who ever from a Christian pulpit shook the hearts of men with the sweet thunders of the gospel. Ask him if he has read John Milton, the author of the greatest poem in English literature, and one of the mightiest geniuses who ever enshrined

soaring thought in immortal verse. Ask him if he has heard of John Bunyan, the man who wrote the greatest allegory ever written in any language. Ask him if he has heard the name of Oliver Cromwell, the strongest man who has sat on the English throne since the days of William the Conqueror. These are only a few of an immortal company of saints and heroes who stopped the mouths of lions and turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

#### IV

##### PURITAN ACHIEVEMENTS

And as for what the Puritans did, who can tell the completed story? When your mole-eyed critic has finished his jibes at the nasal twang and the boorish manners, remind him of a few of the great things which the Puritans accomplished. When kingship under the Stuarts was climbing up the rounds of power, seeking to reproduce on English soil a despotism like that of France and Spain, it was Puritanism which boldly faced the conquering usurper and trod him into the dust. When the English Church was exercising an authority which Christ never gave it, and when Church officers like William Laud were cutting men's ears off and slitting their noses and branding their cheeks because they refused to conform to ecclesiastical customs which the Church had decreed, it was Puritanism which rebelled against the great usurpation and won for organized Christianity the liberty which is our pride and glory. In an age when Catholic Spain ruled the seas, and Catholic Rome was making desperate efforts to regain the lordship of the lands, it was

Puritanism which shattered the fleets of Spain and paralyzed the armies of the emissaries of Rome. It was the Puritan spirit which braced the hearts of twenty thousand Englishmen to face the dangers of the ocean and the greater perils of an unknown land, and these twenty thousand pioneers have done more to shape the structure of our institutions, and to fix our moral and political ideals, and to mold the temper and disposition of our people than any other twenty thousand men and women who have ever crossed the sea. Mr. John Fiske, in the finest piece of historical writing which ever came from his pen, has traced with a master's hand the great drama in which the political center of gravity was shifted from the Tiber and the Rhine to the Thames and the Mississippi, and in his opinion the most significant of all the events which prophesied the final triumph of the English over the Roman idea of nation building was the migration of English Puritans across the Atlantic Ocean to repeat in a new environment and on a far grander scale the work which their forefathers had wrought in Britain. In the mightiest contest ever waged on earth between two contradictory ideas, Puritanism was the tremendous militant force that determined the issue.

But it is not only in church and state that we are to look for the conquests of the Puritan spirit. It was pointed out long ago by Charles Kingsley that even in the world of fashion the Puritans have conquered, and that they have determined for the modern English-speaking world the canons of taste. In the seventeenth century the men of fashion wore their hair in graceful curls hanging over their shoulders. It

seemed to the Puritans that a man should cut his hair short. In derision they were called "round-heads." But every man to-day is a round-head. O Puritan, thou hast conquered! The gentlemen of the seventeenth century dressed in gaudy colors. They loved red and green and blue. It seemed to the Puritans that sober colors were more becoming. And here again the world has come round to where the Puritan took his stand. When we dress in brown and drab and black we confess that the Puritan was a man capable of setting fashions which are worth following. Three centuries ago it was customary for men to bedeck themselves with jewelry, ribbons, and laces, against which the Puritans rebelled. To them a man was dressed in taste only when he dressed plainly. In the matter of dress and manners the Puritan triumph has been complete. We no longer count him a gentleman who was counted such in the days of Shakespeare. The English gallant of those days seems to us a dude or fop. His pockets were filled with cards and dice, his mouth was filled with oaths, and his ideas of morality had not come to him from the New Testament. This perfumed, ruffled, swaggering dandy was offensive to the Puritan upon whom a nobler ideal of manhood had dawned. And here again the Puritan has conquered. Even the facetious people who make fun of the Puritans have accepted the Puritanic conception of a gentleman.

## V

## WHAT WE OWE

Upon every department of our life these mighty men have left the prints of their hands, and it

is becoming in us to render them the homage which is their due. We cannot rightly interpret history until we understand these men, for in the words of John Richard Green, "the whole history of English progress on its moral and spiritual side has been the history of Puritanism." The unprejudiced scholars of all countries and parties agree with Macaulay in saying "they were the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced." We belittle ourselves whenever we attempt to belittle them. We show ourselves either ignorant or biased whenever we refuse to acknowledge the debt which the world owes them. The men of the seventeenth century were excusable for their unjust judgments upon Puritan conceptions and conduct, for they were obliged to look at them through a distorted atmosphere filled with prejudice and rumor. But we need not be thus blinded. We can see them through an atmosphere which the lapse of time has cleansed. We are far enough removed from them to view them in the right perspective, and to catch the true proportion of their lives and deeds. We are indeed ungrateful and contemptible if we ever allow ourselves to think or speak disrespectfully of the men who bought for us with agony and bloody sweat our dearest rights and privileges, and who with tears and blood laid the deep foundations on which have been reared the fabric of our liberties.

## VI

### FOUR COMPANIES OF REFORMERS

Out of the heart of Puritanism Congregationalism came. In times of reform men go to

different lengths. How far a man will go depends on his temper, education, insight, and the combination of his faculties. Some men by the momentum of hereditary forces must be radicals, others must be conservatives. The men of the sixteenth century who started out to reform the Church stopped at different points. There were four revolts, each one more radical than the one which preceded it. First came what we may call the Episcopal revolt. There were Englishmen who were devoted to the English Church and who loved its polity and forms of administration, but who wished to purge it of its corruptions and to cut it loose from some of the usages and traditions with which the Church of Rome had bound it. These men clung to the sacraments, the creeds, the episcopacy, and the general structure of an established national Church. Freed from the pope, all they asked was that certain features of the Roman paraphernalia might be dispensed with. Bishop Hooper, sometimes called the Father of Puritanism, may stand in our mind as a representative of this class. He made war on Romish ceremonies, and because of this he was one of the first to be burned at the stake by Bloody Mary.

But other Englishmen went farther than Hooper. There were men who were not content with simply cutting off the pope: they insisted that the bishops must go too. The bishops had for centuries been tyrannical in their temper and had claimed and exercised prerogatives which the New Testament did not give them. There was no peace or freedom for the Church of Christ — so many Englishmen felt — unless the bishops should be driven out and the ecclesiastical authority

be placed in the hands of a body of presbyters, part of them clergymen and the other part laymen. Here we come to a fuller recognition of the rights of laymen than the Church had known since the days of the apostles. Christians who preferred to be ruled by presbyters became known as Presbyterians. They retained the sacraments and the creeds and, like the Episcopalians, were stout defenders of a state church. Thomas Cartwright may stand as an illustrious champion of the Presbyterian position.

But there were Englishmen not so conservative as Thomas Cartwright. They were afraid of ruling elders no less than of bishops, and claimed that as the faith was once for all delivered to the saints, so also ought supreme authority in the Church to lie in the hands of the people. They believed that presbyter was only priest writ large, and that men could never enjoy the freedom wherewith Christ had made them free until every congregation of faithful men was a democracy, exercising complete control over all its affairs. This meant of course that the Act of Supremacy was a mistake, for Jesus Christ and not Elizabeth was the head of the Church. It also meant that the Act of Uniformity was a usurpation, for every congregation of faithful men had a right to worship God in ways which seemed to it best. These radicals were known as Separatists and were hated of all men. They were feared and shunned by Romanists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians alike, as traitors to their country and ecclesiastical anarchists bent on shattering the Church of God to fragments. Six of them were seized and hanged during the reign of Elizabeth, and hundreds of others suffered



many things at the hands of state officials. The Episcopalians had placed power in the hands of the bishops, the Presbyterians in the hands of the presbyters, the Separatists in the hands of the people, but in the sixteenth century to trust the people was both treason and blasphemy. John Robinson was one of the bravest and brainiest of these Separatists. He was the pastor of the church a portion of whose members landed at last on Plymouth Rock.

But to certain Englishmen John Robinson was a conservative. There were men who insisted on going farther. The Separatists had cast off pope, bishop, presbyter, and state church, but they clung to the sacraments and the clergy and the creeds. Why should not these also be cast off? Why not make Christianity wholly spiritual, burning up every sign and symbol which could suggest to the mind the ancient tyranny and the age-long corruption? God's voice in the soul of man, this, so these men asserted, is enough, and anything beyond this is both unscriptural and dangerous. These radicals became known as Quakers, and George Fox stands in history as their father.

Here, then, we reach the extreme limits of the Puritan movement. Beyond this it was not possible to go. One set of men threw off the pope, the second set threw off the bishops, the third set threw off the presbyters, the fourth set threw off the clergy, sacraments, and creeds. And thus the splendid Roman Catholic Church, with her awe-inspiring hierarchy and her elaborate and magnificent ceremonials, stands at one extreme, while at the other extreme we have only a little company of plainly dressed, earnest-

faced people, waiting in silence for the movement of God's spirit. Roman Catholics and Quakers are separated from one another by the entire diameter of Christian thought. Under the influence of Rome the Church of the Carpenter of Nazareth was arrayed in gorgeous and multitudinous robes. One robe after another was torn from her by the hands of devoted reformers until at last, without clergy, sacrament, or creed, she stood naked, listening not to parliament or council, pope or king, but to Him who although not seen is loved.

## VII

### CONGREGATIONALISTS AND BAPTISTS

But it is the Separatists with whom we are just now concerned. They did not agree among themselves and divided into two bands, the first calling themselves Baptists, the second becoming known as Independents. These Independents on reaching the new world became known later on as Congregationalists. The Baptists and Independents agreed on all points save two, the mode of baptism and the proper subjects of baptism. To the Independents the form of baptism was not essential, various forms having been used in Bible times, and therefore any one of these is valid. To the Baptists there was no valid baptism unless the entire body of the believer was submerged. The Independents, following the unbroken tradition and practise of the entire Church for over a thousand years, claimed that children of Christian parents are proper subjects for baptism, whereas the Baptists limited this sacrament to those who were able

to make a personal confession of faith in Christ. But in their general conceptions of church polity, and in their root ideas of God and Christian privileges and freedom, the Baptists and Congregationalists have ever been at one. In church government and administration all Baptists are Congregationalists, that is, they agree with us in vesting final authority neither in officials nor in councils, but in the hands of the local congregation of believers.

## VIII

### THE FOUNDATION PRINCIPLE

What is the root idea of Congregationalism? The right of every Christian to immediate access to the throne of God. Out of this basal idea everything else flows. Unless this first truth is admitted, then everything else in Congregationalism is without defense. From the days of Robinson downward, we have steadfastly believed in the priesthood of believers. Every believer is a priest and has the right to enter the holy of holies and commune with the Eternal. To every seeking child of God is given directly wisdom, guidance, power. This was vehemently denied by the Church of Rome. Her teaching was that souls must come to God through the Church. By the Church was meant priest, bishop, cardinal, and pope. Outside the Church there was no salvation. Through the clergy and through the clergy alone came absolution, guidance, favor with God. Our forefathers brushed aside with one magnificent sweep the whole hierarchy from bottom to top, saying, "We are all priests unto God, and each one of us must stand for him-

self before the judgment-seat of Christ." After Henry VIII freed England from the yoke of Rome, the English government attempted to usurp the place which the Roman hierarchy had filled. King and parliament claimed the right, not only to select church officials, but also to determine the forms of worship. The tyranny of Rome was superseded by the tyranny of Canterbury and Whitehall, and our forefathers rose in swift and determined rebellion. Elizabeth claimed the right to say by what forms all her subjects should worship God, and this right the Separatists denied. She hanged a few of them and imprisoned many, but conquered none. James I with more pomp than wisdom declared that he would compel these men to conform to his church laws or he would "harry them out of the land." It was to escape his wrath that the Pilgrims fled into Holland. Charles I was still more despotic than his father. Finding parliament unwilling to be his tool, he ruled for eleven years without a parliament. Through a large part of this period William Laud was practically head of the English Church, and so merciless were his measures to bring non-conforming Christians into subjection, that within these eleven years twenty thousand English Puritans crossed the Atlantic to make their home in New England. These men were determined that no one — be he even pope or king — should stand between the soul and God.

## IX

### WHAT FOLLOWS

But if it be true that every Christian has a right to go straight to God and is capable of

receiving from him wisdom in every time of need, then upon the shoulders of every Christian is rolled a burden of responsibility. If the Christian has rights, he also has duties. If he has privileges, he also has obligations. If he can become a partaker of the divine life, then he may be safely trusted. He may be relied on to take a share in conducting God's business on earth. He may be entrusted with church administration. In other words, a company of Christian believers, every one of whom has immediate access to the mind and heart of Christ, can be trusted to manage its own church affairs without interference from bishop or pope, council or general assembly. If Christ is present wherever two or three are assembled together in his name, then his cause will not suffer if left entirely to those among whom he dwells. The congregation of believers has the right to rule, and Christ alone is head.

It is for this reason we are called Congregationalists: we believe that the congregation, rather than the presbyters, or the bishops, or the pope, can be trusted to decide what it ought to do. A church must have a form of worship. Who shall decide what it shall be? We say let the congregation decide it. Why not? Who shall write the confession of faith? Let the congregation do it. It is instructed of Christ. Who shall choose the minister and the other church officials? The congregation, certainly. Who shall determine who shall be admitted into the church and who shall be cast out as unworthy, and what shall be the methods of church activity? Why not let the people decide all these questions? If every Christian can go straight to God who gives liberally and upbraids not, surely a company

of faithful men may be trusted to carry on church life and work to the glory of God. Trust the people, that is our message to the world. We are ecclesiastical democrats. We believe in government of the people, by the people, and for the people. That is our platform in politics, that is our creed in religion. The people may make mistakes, but their blunders will not be more numerous or costly than those made by selected bodies of church officials, or by national or international assemblies. This, then, is Congregationalism: the right of every local body of believers to fix its own forms of worship, to phrase its own creed, to choose its own officers, and to administer without outside check or interference its own church affairs.

## X

### HOW THE DENOMINATIONS DIFFER

It is in this local independence that we differ from the other branches of the Christian Church. The Episcopal Church believes in uniformity of worship. That idea is an inheritance from the days of Elizabeth which it has never been willing to cast off. Every Episcopal church throughout the country must accept at the hands of the general "convention" a prescribed form of worship and this must not be departed from by any congregation in the entire Episcopal communion. We Congregationalists do not believe in binding men so. Human beings differ in temperament and taste, in aptitudes and culture, and forms which are edifying to one company of Christians are only wearisome to others. We Congregationalists say let every congregation worship in

the way which best satisfies its needs and promotes its growth in holiness. The little congregation in a mining town in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains might not want a service like the one preferred by churches in New York or Boston, and these might not care for the one most helpful to Christians on the frontier. Let the church in the east worship in its own way, and let the western church direct its worship as it chooses, and let neither body of believers tyrannize in these matters over the other, for Christ has made us free. That is Congregationalism.

From the Presbyterians we differ chiefly in our government. The presbytery, synod, and general assembly are councils with judicial powers: the councils of Congregationalism have advisory functions only. What the general assembly decrees all loyal Presbyterians must obey: what our national council advises all good Congregationalists will do, so far as the advice commends itself to their best judgment. Under one form of government the restrictions are external and legal, under the other the compulsions are interior and spiritual. By the action of the general assembly, one creed is binding on all Presbyterian preachers and churches: Congregational churches phrase their own creeds, each church for itself. The present creed of the Presbyterians is the Westminster Confession, an inheritance of the seventeenth century. In the judgment of many Presbyterian leaders this creed is antiquated and in certain parts unchristian and false. But no matter how widely thousands of Presbyterians may dissent from their creed and how vigorously individual leaders may

attack it, it remains the authorized confession of faith of all Presbyterian clergymen and churches until the general assembly has modified it or cast it away. No Congregational church can be obliged to subscribe to any creed which is not acceptable to the majority of its members.

From the Methodists we differ, among other things, in our freedom in the choice of ministers. According to the theory of Methodism pastors are chosen by the bishop, and the appointment of the bishop is final. The members of the church may vigorously protest and the preacher himself may be reluctant to go, but if all are loyal Methodists they will abide by the decision of the bishop no matter what it may be. Congregationalism submits to no such bondage. We believe that the members of a church know better than any outside officials which man can most acceptably meet their needs and build them up in righteousness. No man can become the pastor of any Congregational church without receiving a majority vote of all the members who care to express their preferences in choosing a leader.

From the Catholics we differ in government at almost every point. With them the hierarchy is supreme, with us the people. It is the Catholic clergy who determine the entire policy of the church and fix every detail in its administration: in a Congregational church nothing of moment is done without the consent of the laity. According to the Roman idea the clergy constitute the church: according to the Congregational idea the church is made up of the Lord's followers.



## XI

## OUR MISSION

What then has been the mission of Congregationalism? It has taught the world new lessons in freedom. It has demonstrated that the people may be trusted. By admitting laymen into new liberty it has developed the sense of individual responsibility and produced a body of Christian people who have profoundly influenced the temper and methods of the entire Christian world. There is not a denomination which does not bear on it the marks of our influence. We have radiated the spirit of liberty into every branch of the Christian Church in the new world. The Roman Catholic Church in the United States is widely different in temper and ideals from the same Church in any other land. American Catholic laymen have in many instances rebelled against the tyranny of their ecclesiastical superiors, manifesting an independence and determination to secure their rights which remind one of the spirit which has from the beginning dominated our Congregational churches. We have above all others contributed to the creation of that atmosphere of democracy under whose continuous and irresistible influence all American institutions have taken their present shape. Because of the strength and influence of our leaders we have been able to be the advance guard in many a noble cause.

In the great work of education we have always been in the forefront. We founded the first college established in the new world, and planted the idea out of which our public school system has developed. If men are to be trusted they

must be educated. To those who rule in state and church, knowledge is indispensable. Bowdoin and Dartmouth, Amherst and Williams, Harvard and Yale — all founded by Congregationalists — are witnesses to our unfaltering belief that neither state nor church is secure unless the people have knowledge. Streams of influence have flowed from these New England colleges across the land, causing colleges and academies and schools to spring up, helping to shape the life of communities and to fix the temper and ideals of our civilization. First in education, we were first also in the work of home and foreign missions. We sent the first Christian workers among the Indians, and organized the first American society to carry the gospel to foreign lands. We are the light brigade in the Lord's great army, and can dash ahead and seize strategic points and hold them until the heavier battalions come up. We did this in the days of slavery. We pushed our work into the South and, while other churches held aloof, we preached the rights of black men under the eaves of southern meeting-houses in which the worshipers had forgotten that a negro was the child of God. Our freedom gives us room to act and that at once. While radicals and conservatives in the national councils of the other branches of the Church wrestle with one another, the latter constantly holding the former back from attempted reformations, we are free to plunge at once into whatever great work the Lord assigns, and can keep abreast of the most advanced thought and most efficient methods of the times. If any Congregational church is ever a laggard in the day of progress or ever a recreant to present duty, it is not because it is handicapped by denomina-

tional machinery, but because its pastor and members are blind to opportunity and unwilling to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

## XII

### OUR CONTRIBUTIONS

But we have given more than our spirit to our sister denominations. We have assisted them in their work by lavish contributions of men and money. Many of the giants of Presbyterianism were born in Congregational homes, and Episcopacy owes not a little of its strength to the men whose torches were lit at our fires. The greatest Episcopal preacher which America has produced was given to that denomination by a Congregationalist mother, and the successor of Bishop Brooks was reared and trained within our denominational fold. Run through the churches of the metropolis, and you will be surprised to find what a large proportion of the effective preachers and the faithful and influential laymen have on them the marks either of Congregational ancestry or Congregational training. Our polity has produced a type of Christian which is prized and utilized in every branch of the Christian Church. Of our money we have given so freely to outside causes that our own enterprises have often been crippled by deficits resulting from our indiscriminate generosity.

## XIII

### OUR DEBTS

If we have given, we also have received both in brain and treasure from every branch of the Chris-

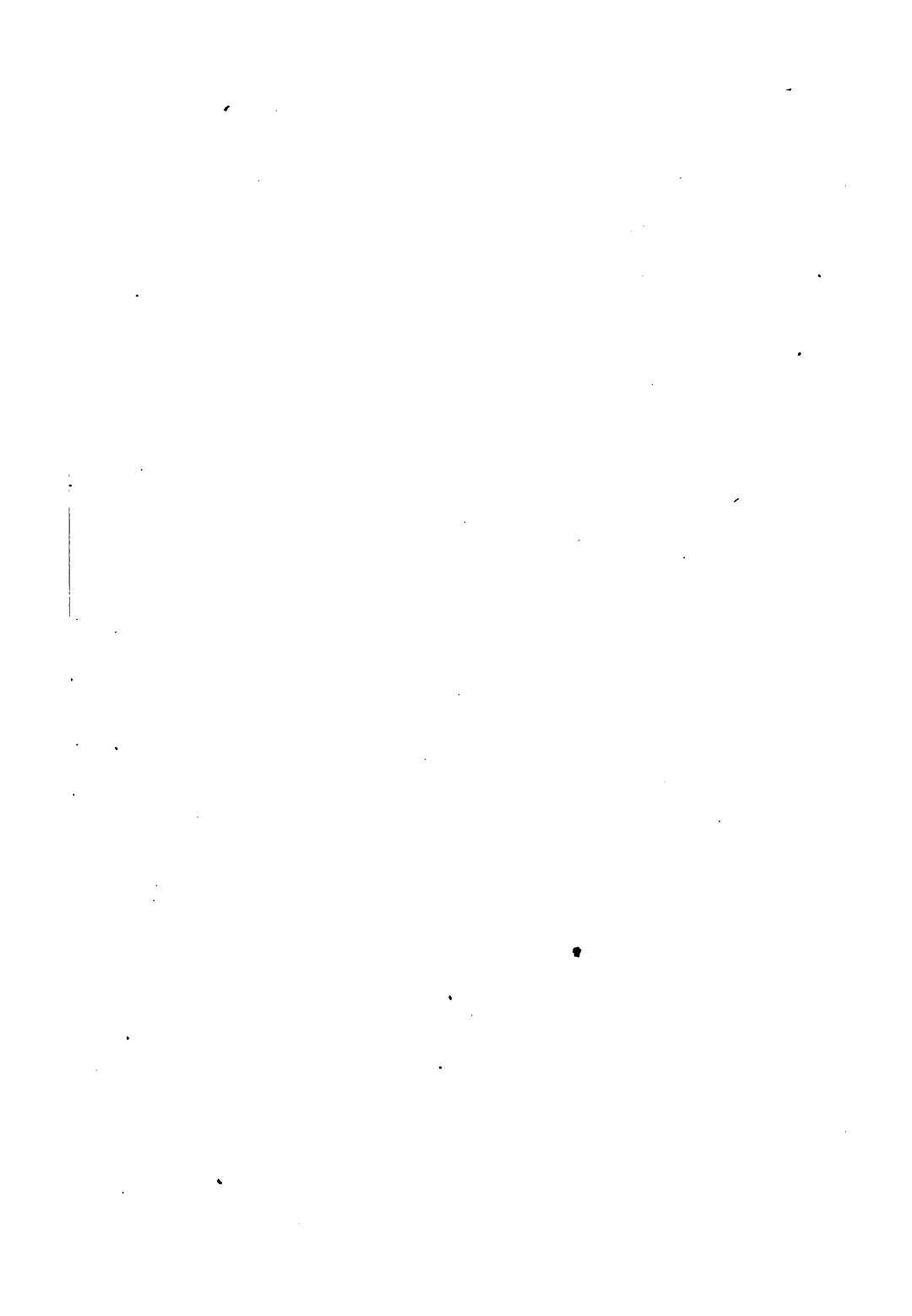
tian Church. We have not lived alone nor have we worked alone. Whatever is excellent in the methods and labors of other Christians we claim the privilege of using. All things are ours because we belong to Christ. As a branch of the universal Church we prize and use whatever treasures have been given to preceding generations. Everything that belongs to Christianity belongs to us, and from every branch of Christendom we have taken ideas and interpretations which have enriched our denominational life. To the Presbyterians we have been bound by ties especially close and tender, freely exchanging ministers and laymen, and for many years working together in home and foreign missionary labors.

#### XIV

##### OUR SPIRIT

Indeed, our hospitality to all members of the great household of faith and our willingness to cooperate with all who call upon the name of the Lord have been our crowning characteristics. We are not sectarian nor exclusive. We dwell more upon the points on which we agree with our neighbors than upon the points on which we differ. So seldom do our ministers preach on Congregationalism that thousands of our people do not know our history and cannot state the distinguishing principles of our denominational life. So slight is the emphasis placed on denominational loyalty that our members on moving from one locality to another pass readily into whatever communion happens to be nearest to them. Congregationalists above all others are sought after by those soliciting money for needy causes,

so great is their reputation for willingness to help whatever movement promises to advance the kingdom of our Lord. We have no quarrels with anybody. Claiming the right to worship God in our own way, and to do our work as seemeth to us best, we give to every body of Christians the rights which we claim for ourselves. If many Christians are helped by incense and candles, let them have them; if others like an elaborate liturgy, let them enjoy it; if others prefer bishops or presbyters, or presiding elders, or baptism by immersion only, it is their privilege to have what they desire. We deny to no man the freedom with which Christ has set us free. We are willing to cooperate with all branches of the Church so far as they will let us. We strive to live at peace with all our neighbors. While we do not believe in the uniformity of the Church, we do believe most heartily in its unity, and our constant aim is to keep "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." With all true Christians everywhere we join with Christ in his high priestly prayer that all his followers may be one. We believe in the "Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints."



JUN 29 1977

BX7232 .J4  
Congregationalism,  
Andover-Harvard

AIG2408



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Call Number

JEFFERSON, Charles Edward.

AUTHOR

Congregationalism

TITLE

BX  
7232  
.J4